

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ABIDJA 03456 100211Z

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SUBJ: PARA FOR IVORY COAST-AMBASSADOR'S OVERVIEW

REF: (A) STATE 30667, (B) ABIDJAN A-54

1. IVORY COAST PARA AIR POUCHED TO DEPARTMENT APRIL 7.

2. IN EVENT MATERIAL FROM IT NEEDED IN CONNECTION BRIEFING
PAPERS FOR OFFICIAL VISITORS TO IVORY COAST, FOLLOWING IS
AMBASSADOR'S OVERVIEW:

QUOTE IVORY COAST CONTINUES TO BE ONE OF A HANDFUL OF
POLITICALLY STABLE, ECONOMICALLY GROWING AND PRO-WESTERN NATIONS
IN BLACK AFRICA. PRESIDENT FELIX HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY, RE-ELECTED IN
1975 FOR ANOTHER FIVE-YEAR TERM, IS SEVENTY YEARS OLD, IN GOOD
HEALTH, AND STILL CLEARLY AND UNCOTESTEDLY LEADER OF HIS

COUNTRY OF 6.7 MILLION.

IN 1975 HE TOOK STEPS TO ASSURE A SMOOTH TRANSITION SHOULD HE DIE,
BECOME INCAPACITED OR DECIDE TO RETIRE DURING THE NEXT FIVE
YEARS. HIS SUCCESSOR WOULD BE PHILIPPE YACE', PRESIDENT OF THE
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE COUNTRY'S SINGLE
PARTY. THE NEW MINISTERIAL COUNCIL, NAMED IN MARCH, CONTAINS A
BROADER GEOGRAPHIC AND ETHNIC DISTRIBUTION, SPOKESMEN FOR
FORMER POLITICAL "OUTS" WHO HAVE BEEN "REHABILITATED" AND A
YOUNGER AGE GROUP (AVERAGE AGE, 44) THAN IN THE PAST. THUS,
THE NEW GENERATION IS BEING PHASED IN WHILE THE OLD LEADER
REMAINS IN POWER. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY NOMINATIONS WILL HENCEFORTH
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ABIDJA 03456 100211Z

DEPEND ALMOST ENTIRELY ON LOCAL PARTY PREFERENCES, AND THE

PARTY IS BEING MODERNIZED.

WHILE THE ECONOMIC GROWTH RATE OF THE COUNTRY IN 1975 WAS OFFSET BY INTERNATIONAL INFLATION, IVORY COAST MAINTAINED ITS POSITION AMONG THE WORLD'S LEADING COFFEE AND COCOA PRODUCERS AND SIGNS POINTED TO AN UPWARD TURN IN TIMBER EXPORTS IN 1976. DIVERSIFICATION, MODERNIZATION AND INDUSTRIALIZATION OF OTHER AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS--RICE, COTTON, SUGAR, PALM OIL--GAVE PROMISE OF A RESUMPTION OF REAL ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE COMING TWO YEARS. THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUED TO PLAN FOR IRON MINING, IMPROVED TRANSPORTATION AND ADDITIONAL HYDRO-ELECTRIC POWER. THE FRENCH PRESENCE, BETWEEN 40-50,000, CONTINUES TO BE CRITICAL FACTOR IN THE COUNTRY'S MODERNIZATION. IT IS OFFICIALLY ENCOURAGED BY PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET, WHILE MANY MEASURES ARE TAKEN TO EDUCATE IVORIANS TO REPLACE THE FRENCH. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE SO FAR THAT ANY REASONABLY QUALIFIED IVORIANS ARE DENIED JOBS BECAUSE FOREIGNERS FILL THEM.

EQUALLY CRITICAL IS THE PRESENCE OF AT LEAST ONE AND A HALF MILLION NON-IVORIAN AFRICANS AT THE BOTTOM LEVELS OF THE ECONOMY--PLANATION WORKERS, GUARDIANS, SERVANTS, SMALL MERCHANTS. THEY FILL JOBS THAT IVORIANS REFUSE TO TAKE.

THE BENEFITS OF IVORY COAST'S DEVELOPMENT ARE GRADUALLY SPREADING TO THE POORER AREAS OF THE COUNTRY. ROADS, SCHOOLS, INCENTIVES TO PRODUCTION OF DRY-LAND CROPS ARE ALL HELPING THE POOR NORTH AND SOUTH-WESTERN REGIONS. ACTUAL AND PLANNED SUGAR AND SOY BEAN PRODUCTION WILL BE CONCENTRATED IN THE NORTH. COTTON AND RICE PRODUCTION ARE EXPANDING RAPIDLY IN THE NORTH. AT THE SAME TIME, OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO THE UNITED STATES IS THAT IVORY COAST MAINTAINS A LIBERAL FOREIGN INVESTMENT POLICY, CONTINUES TO PAY ITS FOREIGN DEBTS ON TIME AND IS INCREASINGLY ANXIOUS TO DIVERSIFY ITS TRADING PARTNERSHIPS. IVORY COAST IS NO LONGER THE SPECIAL "GAME PRESERVE" OF FRANCE.

TO MAKE OPPORTUNITIES EVEN MORE ATTRACTIVE TO THE FOREIGN BUSINESSMAN, THERE ARE MANY FIRST CLASS HOTELS (EVEN IN DISTANT CITIES IN THE COUNTRY), AIRLINE SCHEDULES PERMIT DIRECT FLIGHTS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ABIDJA 03456 100211Z

TO MOST WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICAN COUNTRIES, AS WELL AS EAST AFRICA, EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA. TELECOMMUNICATIONS WITH EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA ARE RAPID, EG. DIRECT DIALING AND TELETYPE, MODERN HOUSING AND OFFICE SPACE, WHILE EXPENSIVE, ARE AVAILABLE. IVORY COAST'S FOREIGN POLICIES ARE MODERATE TO CONSERVATIVE BY AFRICAN STANDARDS. PRESIDENT HOUPHOUET IS PRO-WESTERN AND STRONGLY ANTI-COMMUNIST. HE WAS DEEPLY DISAPPOINTED BY OUR FAILURE TO OFFSET THE SOVIET-CUBAN SUPPORT

TO THE MPLA IN ANGOLA. HE FEARS THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REST OF AFRICA OF THE "DEFAT" OF THE AFRICAN MODERATES THERE. TO PROTECT IVORY COAST'S FLANKS, HE COULD DECIDE IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS TO OPEN THE DOOR WIDER TO RELATIONS WITH MAJOR COMMUNIST POWERS, HAVING SEVERED RELATIONS WITH TAIWAN TO THIS TIME. IT WOULD NOT BE A CHANGE OF CONVICTIONS, BUT A PRAGMATIC EVALUATION OF WEST AFRICA'S FUTURE.

ON THE OTHER HAND, HOUPHOUET CONTINUES TO PRESS "DIALOGUE" WITH SOUTH AFRICA, INCLUDING A JUST-COMPLETED RECIPROCAL VISIT HERE BY SOUTH AFRICA'S MINISTER OF INFORMATION(AND, INCIDENTALLY, INTERIOR). THIS FLIES IN THE FACE OF THE AST MAJORITY OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND AT A TIME WHEN THE "WHITE REDOUBT" OF SOUTHERN AFRICA IS ON THE DEFENSIVE. THE PRESIDENT IS THUS UNAFRAID OF FOREIGN OPINIONS WHEN HE IS CONVINCED HIS OBJECTIVES ARE SOUND.

IN THE OAU, IVORY COAST IS ONE OF THE LEADERS OF THE "MODERATES". IT SUPPORTS MANY OF OUR POSITIONS IN THE UN(EVEN WHEN THEY DIFFER FROM FRENCH POSITIONS).

FINALLY, IN FOREIGN ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, IVORY COAST PLAYS A LEADING ROLE IN MANY FRANCOPHONE AND WEST AFRICAN ORGANIZATIONS-MONETARY UNIONS, DEVELOPMENT BANKS, ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES. DOMESTIC STABILITY, ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH, OPENNESS TO FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND TRADE DIVERSIFICATION, FACILITIES FOR FOREIGN BUSINESSMEN AND A COMPATIBLE FOREIGN POLICY ALL FAVOR THE CONTINUATION OF PRESENT U.S. INTERESTS IN IVORY COAST. THE RESULT HAS BEEN A SLOW BUT STEADY INCREASE IN U.S. TRADE WITH AND INVESTMENT IN THIS COUNTRY, A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF NEW CONTACTS WITH AMERICAN ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION FIRMS AND AN INFLUX OF AMERICAN BUSINESSES ESTABLISHING THEIR AFRICAN HEADQUARTERS HERE.

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PAGE 04 ABIDJA 03456 100211Z

THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, TOO, HAS BEEN EXPANDING ITS USE OF IVORY COAST AS A CENTER FOR WEST AFRICAN REGIONAL ACTIVITIES. NEARLY HALF OF THE U.S. MISSION STAFF OF 110 IN ABIDJAN IS ATTACHED TO AID'S REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE, COVERING TWENTY-THREE COUNTRIES. ANOTHER LARGE OFFICE IN THE MISSION IS THE REGIONAL SECURITY OFFICE, COVERING ELEVEN COUNTRIES AND GIVING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO TWENTY-ONE. THE REGIONAL BUDGET AND FISCAL OFFICE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR NINE COUNTRIES AND THE DEFENSE ATTACHE'S OFFICE FOR FIVE. IN ALL, TWO-THIRDS OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN ABIDJAN HAVE REGIONAL RATHER THAN BILATERAL FUNCTIONS, AND MANY OF THE OTHERS INVOLVED ONLY IN IVORY COAST ARE CALLED UPON TO FOLLOW THE ACTIVITIES OF REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS LOCATED HERE. THERE IS A GOOD PROSPECT OF ANOTHER LARGE CONTINGENT MOVING IN LATER THIS YEAR OR NEXT IF THE IVORY COAST

GOVERNMENT AGREES TO RECEIVE THE WEST AFRICAN TELETYPE
TRANSMISSION SYSTEM AND A STAFF OF AS MANY AS
TWENTY-FIVE HERE.

THUS, WE ARE FAST BECOMING A "BEDROOM COMMUNITY" FOR LARGE
UNITS BASED IN,BUT NOT WORKING FULL-TIME ON IVORIAN ISSUES.
AS LONG AS IVORY COAST REMAINS POLITICALLY STABLE AND
ECONOMICALLY GROWING, THE TRAFFIC WILL BEAR THIS. OUR
PRIMARY INTEREST IS TO SEE THESE CONDITIONS CONTINUE. AS OF
NOW THE PROSPECTS FOR 1976-77 ARE EXCELLENT. UNQUOTE
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